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**EGYPT**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Environment Wins in Schools' Contests

### Competitions spark youths' activism to keep their communities clean



Students read a question during an environmental competition sponsored by a USAID project in Egypt.

***"Now, my students are not only interested in environmental problems, they are leading activities by themselves," said Mahmoud Gad, a teacher at the El Shahid Ahmed Shaalan Primary School.***

Educating schoolchildren about environmental issues is challenging but essential in Shoubra El Kheima, a densely populated suburb of Cairo. The area has long suffered from severe pollution due to nearby industries, including metal smelters that emit hazardous materials such as lead.

To teach children about the environmental challenges facing their community, a USAID project has helped the area's schools integrate environmental education into their school activities. It also organized environmental competitions between five primary and secondary schools in Shoubra El Kheima as a fun way for students to apply what they have been learning.

A quiz bowl tournament at the local library provided a forum for the youth to show off their environmental knowledge. Winning teams earned savings bonds as well as bragging rights. Another competition asked youth to come up with creative ideas for improving environmental conditions at their school. Students at one school started a recycling program, while others fashioned decorations from old potato chip bags.

Mahmoud Gad, a teacher at the El Shahid Ahmed Shaalan Primary School, said the competitions have had a big impact on his class, which won one of the competitions. He noted proudly that now "the students are dedicated to keeping the school clean and have set aside a day every month for this."

More importantly, Gad sees USAID's work with the schools contributing to other positive changes in the community. "Students naturally tell their parents about what they did at school and this is starting to affect the whole area. There is a sense of change in the community. Even the government is moving towards solving problems. Streets that used to be full of garbage are now clean," he said.